

~~SECRET~~

RHC BAINFING

18 May 1956

SOUTH KOREAN ELECTIONS

1. Returns from the South Korean presidential elections reflect a greater degree of opposition to the Rhee government than in any previous election. With the presidential totals virtually complete, President Rhee has carried about 56% of the total vote, with the remainder divided between his only official opponent and invalid ballots cast for the deceased Democratic leader, Sin Ik-hui. Latest totals as of 16 May were as follows:

Syngman Rhee (Liberal)	4,864,598
Choe Pung-an (Progressive)	2,073,450
Invalid	1,762,767

2. The race for the vice presidency, a key post in view of Rhee's advanced age, is at present closely contested between Rhee's running-mate, Yi Ki-pung, and his Democratic opponent, Chang Myon (John H. Chang). With about 60% of the votes tabulated, Chang led Yi by 2,725,682 to 2,310,139 votes. However, returns from rural areas are expected to favor the Rhee-Yi slate, *(give Yi a slight chance)* and may permit Yi to overtake Chang.

3. In 1952 Rhee was elected to a second term with 78% of the vote cast. This year's strong opposition showing is the more remarkable in view of the police support still enjoyed by the government candidates and the confusion which followed the death of Rhee's leading

25X1

DOCUMENT NO.

NO CHANGE IN CLASS.

DECLASSIFIED

CLASS. CHANGED TO: IS 1.1.1

NEXT REVIEW DATE:

AUTH: HR 7020

DATE:

REVIEWER:

SECRET

opponent. Although the vote for leftist Cho Pong-an was larger than generally expected, South Korea's pro-American, anti-Communist orientation was not an issue in the campaign.

4. The opposition show of strength is likely to lead to more vigorous attacks on ^(Rhee's) ~~the~~ administration by opponents previously content to mark time until his death. Should Chang defeat Yi for the vice presidency, the fact that he would then be in a position to succeed Rhee might prompt Rhee to revise the rules of succession.

5. The small vote registered by independent and minor party candidates for the vice presidency reflects the increasing importance attached to political parties as opposed to individuals in South Korean politics. The small support accorded the independent candidacy of former youth corps leader Yi Pong-sok may remove him as a significant force in South Korean politics.